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Perfection *and* Power



TWO DISCOURSES, PUBLISHED BY EARNEST
AND REPEATED REQUESTS

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B.C.L., M.A., Ph.D.

The greatest need of the Church in the Twentieth Century
is fullness of spiritual life and power, and self-
denying, indefatigable efforts to uplift
and save humanity.

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PERFECTION AND POWER.

Christian Perfection.

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."—MATT. 5 : 48.

IS it possible to fulfil this commandment? Does Christ here exact the impossible, or can we through all the provisions of redemption attain to the experience, character and life here required? Surely the Master does not demand from His disciples what is unattainable. How, then, are we to understand this Divine requirement?

There is an infinite sphere which God fills to the uttermost, and is, therefore, a perfect God. There is a finite sphere that we may completely fill and be perfect in our little, limited sphere as He is perfect in His boundless sphere.

A thing may be said to be perfect when it fully meets the purpose for which it was intended, under the circumstances in which it is found. When the reaping machine was first manufactured it simply cut the grain and laid it in a swarth on a table. This was all the maker intended it to do; it was, therefore, a

perfect machine. Later there was an attachment which put it off the table in sheaves, and dispensed with the service of one man. This was all the manufacturer expected of it. It was a perfect reaper. Now it cuts the grain and binds it into sheaves, and dispenses with the services of two or three other men. This, also, is a perfect machine—it meets all the purposes of the manufacturer.

So in different spheres and different circumstances there are different degrees of perfection for God's creatures. The angelic hosts are perfect in their heavenly home. Adam was perfect in his state of primal innocency. Under the economy of redemption there is necessarily different degrees of perfection. There was an inferior perfection for the early patriarchs. Noah was perfect in his generation. Job was a perfect and upright man. God said to Abraham, "Walk before me and be thou perfect."

A larger perfection belonged to the Prophetic period. The Psalmist said, "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright."

There is a still higher perfection under the Gospel dispensation. Jesus said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." To the rich young ruler He said, "If thou wouldst be perfect, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come and follow me." Paul said, "Let us go on to perfection." "Let as many as be perfect be thus minded." "Be perfect, be of good com-

fort, be of one mind, live in peace." James states, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man."

Now, what is this perfection to which we may attain under the dispensation of the Spirit? To answer this question we will show:

I. What God does for us and in us at the time of our conversion.

II. What still remains to be done before we are perfect Christians.

III. How and when this further work of Grace is to be accomplished.

To what extent are we saved at the time of our conversion?

We must distinguish between our own personal sin and inherited or transmitted defilement. Theologians, therefore, give us two different definitions of sin. It is a wilful transgression of a known law; and it is any want of conformity to the will and likeness of God. The former is the positive, the latter the negative, aspects of sin. The one refers exclusively to our own transgression, the other largely to inherited impurities. At the time of our conversion we are saved—

I. From the *guilt* and *condemnation* of our own personal sins. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh,

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God sending His own Son in likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

2. We are saved also from the defilement of our own personal sin. "We are born from above." "Born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." "We are made new creatures in Christ Jesus." "We are renewed in the Spirit of our minds."

3. At the time of our conversion we are saved from the power of sin. At the time of our regeneration there comes a new Divine power into the human soul. It is the power of God in man, and through this Divine power we are emancipated from the dominion of sin. This freedom from the power of sin is clearly taught by Paul in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin, for he that is dead is freed from sin." "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are

alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. I - sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law but under grace."

"What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid."

"Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" "Being then made free from sin ye became the servants of righteousness." "For when ye were servants of sin ye were free from righteousness." "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life."

4. We are saved from the practice of sin. Christ said, "He that committeth sin is the servant of sin." Paul said, "The servant of sin is free from righteousness." This freedom from the practice of sin is clearly taught by John in the third chapter of his first general Epistle. "Whoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, for His seed remaineth in him and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

But are we, at the time of our conversion, saved from original sin, or inherited defilement? We do not say that there is never any instance in which a man may be so fully instructed in the great privileges of the Gospel, that he at the same time trusts fully in Christ for pardon, and for the thorough puri-

fyng of his soul from all sin, personal and transmitted; but if there are such cases they are exceedingly rare. Usually a man seeking pardon thinks only of his own sin and seeks deliverance from it, and God says to him, "Be it unto thee according to thy faith." Rarely it is that he thinks at that time anything about his inherited defilement. This leads us to consider:

II. What further work after our conversion is necessary to be accomplished in order that we may be perfect Christians? There must be the removal of original sin—of transmitted defilement. The common experience of all Christians is that subsequent to their conversion they are conscious of the uprising of evil thoughts, evil tempers, pride, self-will, covetousness and a host of emotions that are not in harmony with the mind of Christ. These do not reign, but they exist. No Christian should allow any of them to have the ascendancy. They are kept under or subjugated, but the believer is conscious of their existence. This accords with the teachings of Scripture. Paul, writing to the Church at Corinth, says: "Brethren, I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk and not with meat; for hitherto were ye not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal, for whereas there is among you envying and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"

To the Galatians he says: "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. These are contrary the one to the other so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Both the Corinthians and the Galatians whom Paul addressed were babes in Christ, but not perfect Christians.

It is necessary that we should discriminate between the mental and moral powers that belong to the original constitution of our nature, and the perversion of those powers. Otherwise we may be expecting something through redemption that we will never obtain. Emulation, for example, is an original attribute of human nature. It is planted within the soul for our improvement. It sees others above us and it puts forth every effort to rise to their exalted platform. Envy is the perversion of emulation; it sees others above us and would drag them down to our own level. Emulation is right, envy is wrong. Settled antagonism to every form of moral evil belongs to the original constitution of every holy being; it is in the very nature of God. If we did not possess it we would not be like God; but ordinary anger against the *person* that commits the evil is a perversion of this original attribute of human nature, and is sinful. Our souls should abhor the evil, but tenderly pity the perpetuator thereof. Christ once looked round upon the unbelieving Jews "with anger, being grieved for the hardness

of their hearts." In this sense we may be angry and sin not.

Selfishness is the perversion of self love. Selfishness seeks present gratification irrespective of future consequences. It appropriates all it can to self without any regard to the rights and claims of others. Self love seeks our own present and eternal well-being—the highest good for both time and for eternity—and never interferes with the claims or highest well-being of others. So we might go through the whole category of inward emotions, feelings, and desires. Redemption comes to save us, not from the original attributes of human nature, but from the perversion of those attributes.

It is necessary that we should also discriminate between what was sin before Adam's apostasy and what is sin under the economy of Grace. Adam was created perfectly pure, and was placed under the law of absolutely perfect obedience. He fell, and was then allowed another probation on different conditions. He was placed under the law of redemption, and a loving obedience was substituted for an absolutely perfect obedience.

James calls this the "royal law," the "law of liberty." John describes it as the law of love. Paul says, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." It is entirely through Christ that we are placed under this law of loving obedience instead of the law of absolutely perfect obedience. Every human being is, therefore, abso-

lutely depending upon the merits of Christ. Throughout the whole of his life, no matter how high may be his religious attainments, he is constantly transgressing the primal law under which man was created, but he has been placed under this divine law of love and by this law he will be judged. "So speak ye, and so do as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty."

III. How and when are we to attain to the larger work of grace, the freedom from inherited defilements, and the induement with the fulness of the Spirit; or, in other words, to Christian perfection? We must begin seeking this blessing, not when we are backslidden in heart, but when we have the clear witness of our adoption into the family of God.

I. We must be deeply sensible of our need. We must have a knowledge of that moral defilement still clinging to our souls. This knowledge is called by John Wesley, "The repentance of believers." It is essentially different from the repentance of a sinner seeking pardon. When a man comes to Christ penitently seeking deliverance from sin, or justification in the sight of God, he has a deep sense of his own guiltiness. When the believer comes seeking purification from the inward defilements still adhering to his soul, he has no sense of guilt, for "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," but he has a deep sense and intense loathing of the defilements of sin.

After passing through the severe ordeal of affliction, and Job was brought face to face with God, he said, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ears, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore, I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

When Isaiah, the most evangelical of all the prophets, was favored with a vision of God, as recorded in the sixth chapter of his prophecy, he said, "Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."

When Peter saw the manifestation of Christ's power in the miraculous draught of fishes, he said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." In all these cases it was the clear conception of God, of His essential purity, which by contrast revealed the defilement of the human soul. This consciousness of our need is the first step toward a higher life.

2. Having discovered our need, we must next have the full persuasion that God has made ample provision to remove the impurity of sin and replenish our souls with grace. God always adapts His promises to His commands. He commands, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Now look how he fits the promise to the command,—“I will circumcise

thy heart to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayst live." "Be ye holy,; for I am holy." "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." "I will save you from all your uncleanness." "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you who also will do it." It is not a question of what we can do, but what can God do? Hear the testimony of Scripture in regard to Christ's power to save. "He is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him." "He is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Who can measure God's uttermost? Who can limit the range of human thought? Christ's power to save is equal to each, is superior to both. Satan surely has not perverted human nature beyond Christ's power to restore and purify. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." It is a great thing to be filled with God; it is greater to be filled with the fulness of God; but it is greatest to be filled with all the fulness of God.

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Yet this is the birthright privilege of every believer.

3. After a clear conviction of our need, and full assurance of God's provision to meet that need, we must come and make a personal appropriation of His full salvation. We must come with an empty hand. We have nothing to bring to merit His grace. We must come with an open hand of faith, there must be perfect willingness to receive, and intense anxiety to obtain the full salvation which God has provided for us through Christ. It is not enough to believe that God has provided this great salvation for us, or to believe that we may obtain it at some future time, we must believe that *He doeth it now.*

We are not responsible for the presence of inherited or inbred sin. Without our choice it is attached to our souls. But we know that God has made provision for its removal through the redemption of Jesus Christ, and we are responsible for retaining it after we come into the possession of this knowledge. "Where sin aboundeth, grace did much more abound." "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him, also freely give us all things." "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." "Be ye holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy." "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your

reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God." "Lift up a standard for the people." Isa. 62. 10. Here it is: "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Eph. 4. 11-13.

The Gift of Power.

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you : and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."—ACTS 1 : 8.

GOD'S dealings with man may be divided into three great dispensations—the dispensation of the Father, the dispensation of the Son, and the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. The dispensation of the Father was a grand preparatory arrangement. For four thousand years God was preparing the church and the world for the advent and missions of Jesus Christ.

Then came the dispensation of the Son, beginning with the commencement of his public ministry. He came to manifest the Father, to show men how they ought to live, to reveal the fundamental principles of divine truth, and to make a full atonement for sin.

The dispensation of the spirit began with the day of Pentecost, and will be continued to the grand consummation of all things. There are two thoughts in our text :

First, it is the privilege of all believers to receive the gift of the Spirit and of power ; and,

Secondly, we will show the blessed advantages consequent upon this gift of the Spirit.

First, it is the privilege of every believer to receive the gift of the Spirit and of power. By this we do not mean to insinuate that it is now the privilege of believers to receive the Holy Spirit in the sense of working miracles, speaking with tongues or miraculous inspiration, for all did not receive the Spirit in these respects even in the days of the Apostles, which we will hereafter show.

But since the glorification of Jesus Christ, it is the exalted and blessed privilege of every believer to receive the gift of the Spirit in the fulness of His sanctifying grace and power. This is evident from the numerous promises of the Father in the Old Testament; these promises being renewed by John the Baptist; confirmed by Jesus Christ; and verified by their fulfilment on the day of Pentecost. The promises in relation to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament Scriptures are many. It is not necessary that we should cite these in detail; they all seem to be included in that one comprehensive promise recorded in the latter part of the second chapter of Joel. More than six hundred years before the introduction of the Gospel dispensation this prophet foretold the outpouring of the Spirit in the latter days. Hear him: "And it shall come to pass afterward that I shall pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants and upon

the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit."

Time rolled onward, the common vicissitudes of life constantly occurring, until the harbinger of Jesus Christ appeared on the banks of the Jordan, and commanded the people everywhere to repent. Crowds flocked out to his ministry from every grade and class of society. Amongst others were to be found the proud, the self-righteous and hypocritical Pharisees, who met with his pointed rebuke: "O, ye generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

John was a burning and shining light in his day, and many rejoiced in his light. His ministry was very brief; but it was a very successful one, so much so that there seems to have been a general impression that this was the long promised, the long looked for, and, by the devout, the long prayed for, Messiah. As all men were in expectation and mused in their hearts of John whether he was the Christ, the noble-hearted man confessed and denied not; but confessed, saying, "I am not the Christ." Then he renewed the ancient promise given by God the Father and recorded by Joel, saying, "I indeed baptize you with water, but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

While John was thus successfully fulfilling his ministry, on one occasion, he saw Jesus

passing, and cried in the ecstasy of his soul, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Then said he to the people: "I knew Him not; but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is He who baptizeth with the Holy Ghost," and John saw and bare record. The next day John was talking with two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as he walked cried out in the same manner as on the previous day, "Behold the Lamb of God." Those two disciples at once followed Jesus. From day to day the disciples increased in number, until at length it was rumored abroad that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, though Jesus baptized not, but His disciples. That is, he baptized not with water. His baptism was not to be of water, but of the Spirit, not an outward application, but an inward purification; and this baptism was not given, and could not be given, until after the glorification of Jesus Christ.

It is true that the Holy Spirit in certain measure was given both to believers and unbelievers from the beginning, but in the fulness of His sanctifying grace and power, He was not given and could not be given until after the glorification of our Lord, because, in the first place, the Spirit in His fulness was to come in consequence of the atonement of Christ; and, therefore, could not come until

after His sufferings and death; and in the second place, the Spirit in His purifying power was to be a substitute to His disciples and all true believers to the end of time, for the bodily presence of their Lord; and, therefore, was not necessary until after the removal of that bodily presence from among them. Hence: Jesus, on that last great day of the feast, stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink, and whoever believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." This, says the Evangelist, spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive: "For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." From this important passage of inspired truth we learn two very significant lessons. The first is that it is the privilege of every believer to receive the gift of the Spirit, which is obvious from the words, "They that believe on Him *should receive*." Secondly, we learn that since the glorification of Christ it is the blessed privilege of every believer to receive the Spirit in a fulness in which no man ever received Him before the introduction of this dispensation, which is obvious from the words, "The Holy Ghost was not yet given, *because that Jesus was not yet glorified*."

The Master continued with His disciples; they listened to the vast communications of His supernatural knowledge, and beheld His astounding miracles, until at last he began to

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speak unto them in language they could not well comprehend. He spoke of going from them and not leaving them comfortless. "A little while," he said, "and ye shall not see me, and again a little while and ye shall see me, because I go unto the Father." The disciples were exceedingly perplexed in their minds, and said among themselves, "What is this that he saith; we cannot tell what He saith." Jesus said unto them, "Hath sorrow filled your hearts because I told you these things? Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it is expedient that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send Him unto you." Christ must depart first, and then the Comforter in all His consoling and sanctifying power was to be given to the Church.

Christ has departed and, therefore, we maintain that it is now the privilege of every believer to receive the Comforter in the fulness of His power and grace. At length the Master was taken from their head, and the disciples were all scattered abroad. No sooner was their panic over than Christ appeared in their midst as their risen Lord. He went in and out among them for the space of forty days. On one of those occasions He confirmed the ancient promise given by God the Father and recorded by Joel, and renewed by John the Baptist saying, "John indeed baptized you with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

At the end of forty days He led them out as far as Mount Olivet. The last words they heard from His lips as He was taken up into heaven were: "But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had thus spoken while they beheld, He was taken up and a cloud received him out of their sight."

The disciples returned to Jerusalem, but how? With sorrow filling their hearts because the Master was taken from their head? No, but anxiously awaiting the fulfilment of the promise of the Father, they returned into Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing and praising God. It would seem that they removed from the temple to the upper room spoken of in the thirteenth verse of the first chapter of Acts. Here they all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication. Oh, what a scene presents itself to us here. There are at least one hundred and twenty in number, anxiously awaiting the fulfilment of the promise of the Father; one hundred and twenty fervent prayers going up in the name of Jesus for that which the Master had promised within a few days; one hundred and twenty hungering and thirsting after the fulness of God. While they thus waited, with one accord in prayer and supplication, all at once—not gradually, but

suddenly—there came a sound from heaven—not a wind, but a sound—as of a rushing, mighty wind, and spread itself through all the rooms in which they were sitting; and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. First there appeared a great sheet of flame in the room; then it divided itself into shapes like unto tongues, and a tongue sat on each of the entire one hundred and twenty.

Are they now reminded how the Lord in the days of the Prophet Elijah, by a great and fierce wind rent the earth asunder and brake the rocks in pieces before the Lord? But the Lord was not in the wind, and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake, and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire a still small voice, which caused the prophet to wrap his head in his mantle, and the Lord was in it. Whether they are reminded of these circumstances or not, here is first the sound of a rushing, mighty wind, then the cloven tongues like as of fire, sitting upon each of them, and after that the fulness of the Spirit.

We are not, however, for one moment to imagine that this gift of the Spirit was restricted to the day of Pentecost or limited to the Jewish believers. Not so; for subsequently the Gentiles also received the same precious gift from the hands of the Lord. Cornelius

who was a devout man, and feared God with all his house, in obedience to the command of the angel, sent for Peter to instruct him more fully in the way of salvation. While Peter spake to him and to those who were in his house, while he yet spake, the Holy Ghost fell on them that heard as it did upon the disciples in the beginning and those Jews who accompanied the apostle to Cæsarea were astonished because on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The promise of the Father began to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost; it has continued to be fulfilled in every gracious revival of the work of God from that time to the present, and will continue to be fulfilled until the last saved soul shall be raised from earth to glory.

Secondly, we are to show the benefits resulting from this gift of the Holy Spirit. These benefits are three: First, to the individual believer; secondly, to the Church, in her collective capacity; and thirdly, to the world at large.

The first benefit is to the individual believer. We read, "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit." Men differ in their opinion as to what we are to understand by being filled with the Spirit of God. Some would have us believe when we read of being filled with the Holy Ghost that we are to understand thereby the reception of the Spirit in the sense of working miracles, speaking with tongues, or miraculous inspiration. But so far from hav-

ing invariably this signification, that generally it does not signify any such extraordinary gift whatever. For all in the days of the apostles did not receive the Spirit in the sense of working miracles, speaking with tongues, etc. Paul enquires, "Do all speak with tongues, are all workers of miracles, do all prophesy, have all the gifts of healing?" Surely not, but every believer may be filled with the Spirit, for the general exhortation of the Apostle unto the Church is, "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." John the Baptist is said to have done no miracles, and yet it is recorded of him that from infancy he was full of the Holy Ghost. The seven deacons appointed by the apostles were not elected to work miracles or speak with tongues, but were chosen to attend to the secular affairs of the Church that the apostles might give themselves wholly to the ministry of the Word and to prayer; yet these men were to be full of faith and the Holy Ghost.

On the other hand, some would have us believe when we read of being filled with the spirit, that we are to understand nothing more thereby than the reception of the Spirit in any sense. It is one thing to receive the Spirit in a certain measure, it is much greater to be filled with the Holy Ghost. Doubtless the apostles received the Spirit in a certain measure before the day of Pentecost, for on the evening of the resurrection, when Jesus appeared unto the ten in the upper room, He

breathed upon them and said unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Will any man presume to say that those disciples did not receive the Holy Spirit in a certain measure on that occasion. We would not dare to assume such a position, but we would fearlessly maintain that they were not filled with the Holy Ghost until the day of Pentecost. On that memorable occasion they were so filled with the Spirit that all malice and hatred and covetousness were cast out. What low, grovelling views they had of the Messiah's kingdom before the reception of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost? While Jesus was still with them, they were dreaming of the establishment of an earthly kingdom of unparalleled splendor and power. They imagined that one day before long the Master would lay aside His garments of humility, clothe Himself in the habiliments of royalty and power, sway a visible sceptre, wear a visible crown and subjugate all nations, and make the Jews the peculiar favorites of His throne. Hence they were frequently found disputing among themselves who should occupy the most distinguished positions in this new secular kingdom which they supposed Christ would set up. When they were at Capernaum Jesus said unto them, "What was it ye disputed amongst yourselves by the way?" But they held their peace, because by the way they had disputed amongst themselves who should be the greatest. James and John desired to sit, one upon

the right hand, and the other upon the left of Christ in His kingdom, that is, they desired to be the Prime Ministers of State in the new earthly kingdom which they supposed Christ would establish. A similar disputation broke in upon the awful solemnities of the Last Supper. On this occasion Christ quelled their dispute, and rebuked their worldly ambition by the significant and lowly act of feet washing. But now, having received the fulness of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, we have not another instance on record of their disputing amongst themselves who should be the greatest. From that time forward well did they know that the Kingdom of God was not a visible, temporal power, but that the Kingdom of God was within them, and consisted not in meats and drinks, but in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

They were so filled with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost that all servile fear and the man-fearing spirit were cast out. Hear the proud boast of Peter when his Omniscient Master told him that he would deny Him. "Though all should deny thee, yet will not I." "Lord I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death." "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." But up comes Judas Iscariot at the head of a band of men from the chief priests and elders of the people. Peter boldly and rashly pulled out his sword and smote off the right ear of Malchus, the servant of the High Priest; but then his

heart failed him, and like a great coward he thrust his sword into its scabbard, and he and all the disciples forsook their Master and fled. But now, having received the fulness of the Spirit, he who a few weeks before ran away with his sword in his hand, stands with the sword of the Spirit and boldly confronts the astonished and mocking multitude, the astonished ones saying, "What meaneth this?" and the mockers replying, "These men are filled with new wine." But Peter, standing up with the eleven, said, "Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you and hearken to my words. These men are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day, but this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, And it shall come to pass in the last days, said God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." This is the fulfilment of the promise of the Father, which we now see and hear. "Ye men of Israel hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye (perhaps pointing to the murderers of the Lord) have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain, but God hath raised him from the dead." Can it be possible that this is Peter? I imagine, when he began to address the multitude, the mockers and scoffers were

ready to say amongst themselves, "Is not this the man whose countenance fell a short time ago before the face of a damsel in the palace of the High Priest? Is not this he who denied with oaths and blasphemies that he knew his Master? Is not this the man who could use his heels better than his sword, when that deceiver was apprehended in the garden?" Such queries might have originated in their minds when Peter began to speak, but they were soon scattered by the powerful truths which fell from his lips. Look at the man. There is not much of what is now called eloquence about him. He has not been trained in any of the Roman or Greek schools; he is no philosopher; he has acquired no prestige as an orator; but he has been in the theological school of Jesus Christ for three years and a half. He is, therefore, well acquainted with Divinity; has passed through the rushing winds and tongues of flame; he has been endued with the Spirit and with power; and therefore his words are not the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, and there is true eloquence about the man which wrings from the callous heart the cry of penitence.

Look at his audience. Was there ever such a congregation in any other age or country? There was a polyglot crowd of at least seventeen different tongues and dialects; men of different creeds and different nations; mockers

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and scoffers, and men of the baser sort. There were the chief priests and elders of the people with all their dreadful apprehensiveness lest this man's blood should be brought on their hands, a tendency which, doubtless, Peter's sermon had; and yet he impeaches them with the awful crime of crucifying the Lord of life and glory. Look again on this audience. I imagine I already see many heads bowing down like the bull rush. At length they gave vent to the deep emotions that were working within, and cry, in the bitterness of their souls, "Men and brethren, what shall we do? We have committed a crime for which there is no name. Men may call it deicide, but in the vocabulary of heaven it is nameless. Our hands are red with the blood of the Son of God. The flaming eyes of Jehovah are looking us through and through. Hell from beneath is rising to receive its prey. Will hell itself be a refuge to hide us from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb? While black despair was settling upon their sinking souls, the heart-cheering words of infinite mercy drop with balmy accents upon their ears. "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. Oh, did ever words so cheering, words so Christ-like and

divine, at any other period in the world's history fall upon a people so guilty and hell-deserving as those words of the earnest preacher on the audience of the Pentecost; and that sermon was not without its effect, for the same day there were added unto the Church three thousand souls.

We said the first benefit was to the individual believer, the second is to the Church in her collective capacity. We read that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul, neither said any that aught of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things common; for as many as were in possession of lands and houses sold them and brought the price of the things that were sold and laid it down at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made to every man according as he had need; and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayer; and great grace was upon them all.

What a picture of the Church is this. It is a picture of what God intended the Church to be throughout the whole dispensation of the Spirit.

It is this Church that gives the strongest evidence of the divinity of the Christian religion. Men are constantly enquiring, "Who will show us any good?" All the apologies for Christianity and all the evidences that have ever been written in favor of the divinity of the Christian religion will not produce as

much conviction of the divine origin of Christianity as a Church filled with the Holy Spirit. It is an exhibition that cannot be produced by mere human means: it is the product of a divine work; it is the only Church that will evangelize the race. When Christ gave His commission to go and make disciples of all nations, He attached to it a restriction—a prohibition. "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high."

The motto adopted by the young people is, "The evangelization of the world in this generation." Can it be done? Not with the Church as she is, but it can be accomplished with the Church filled with the Spirit, and endued with power from on high. The great want of the twentieth century, here and everywhere, is the Church endued with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then she will go forth "clear as the sun, fair as the moor, and terrible as an army with banners."

The third benefit resulting from the gift of the Holy Spirit is to the world at large. After Pentecost we read that "the Lord added to the Church daily such as were being saved." A multitude of the priests were obedient to the faith. These Jewish priests were the hardest people on earth to convert. All the records through the Acts of the Apostles amongst Jews and Gentiles are records of the wonderful triumphs of the early Church.

How is it that there was such a marvellous display of saving power after Pentecost? Per-

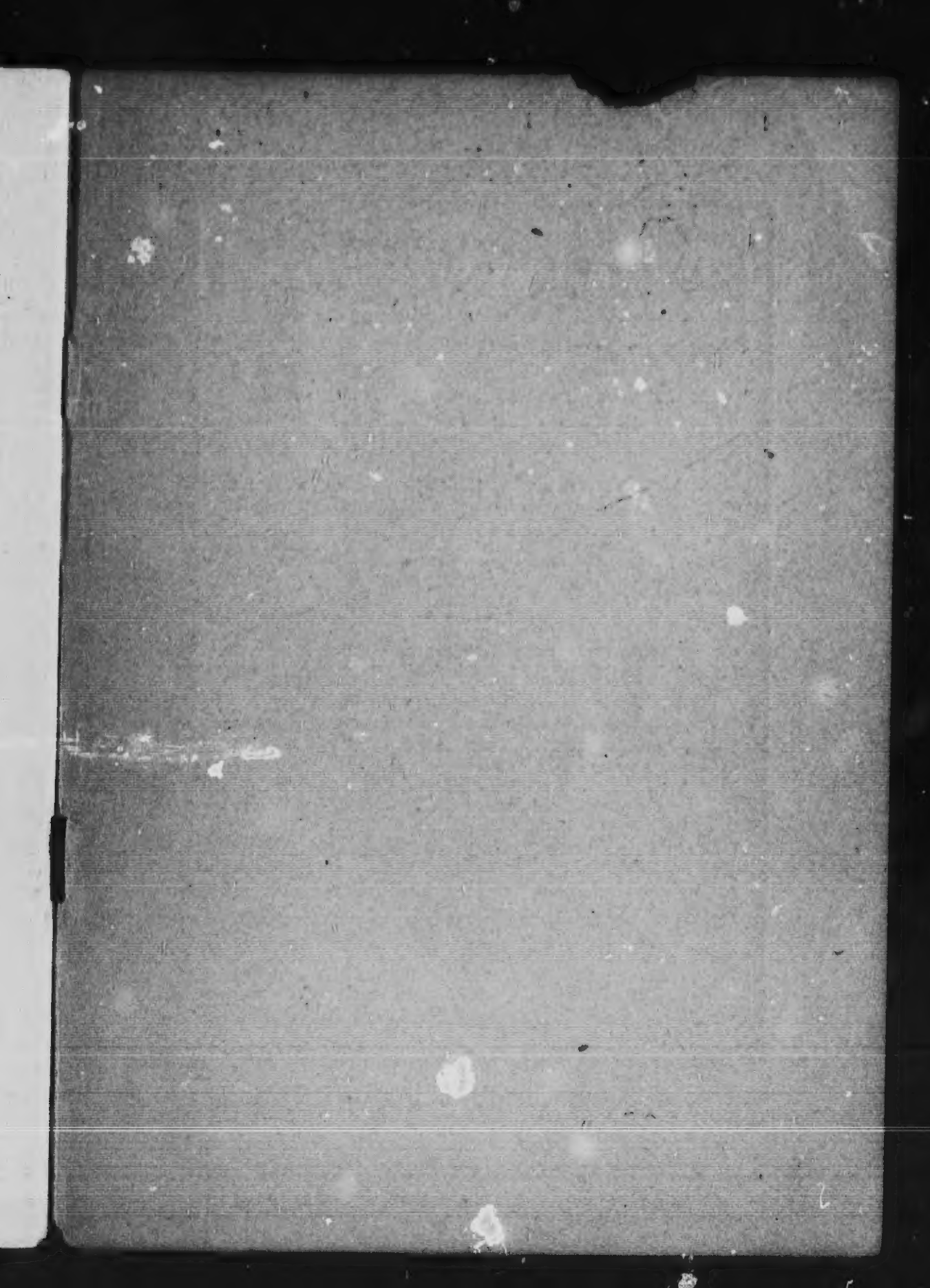
haps the almost unanimous response would be because the ministers were then filled with the Holy Ghost, and their words were with power. We readily grant that this was one very important reason; but we deny that it was the sole reason. Observe the Bible teaches that not only the ministry were filled with the Holy Ghost, but they were "all filled with the Holy Ghost." "Great grace was upon them all," and they "all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." Can we for one moment imagine that those almost heaven-inspired prayers were wafted on the wings of living faith daily to the throne of God in vain? Here were the grand reasons why there was such wonderful saving power in those days; there was a sanctified ministry and a sanctified Church, and both were united in untiring efforts for the universal extension and establishment of the Kingdom of Christ.

This is the great want of the Church to-day: a sanctified ministry and a sanctified Church, and both earnestly and indefatigably laboring to bring the world back unsmitten to the feet of offended Sovereignty. If ever this world is to be converted, we must have a restoration of primitive power and practice; the power of God must act through fully consecrated men and women.

Reader, have you received this outpouring of the Holy Spirit and of power? If not, why have you not? Is it because ample provision is not made for your reception of this heavenly

gift? You cannot look at the promises of the Divine Word and the unlimited provisions of grace, and in the face of these say that God has not provided an amplitude of grace and power to qualify you to take your proper part in the world's evangelization. Do you desire to see the Rose of Sharon springing up in the garden of the Lord and spreading itself to earth's remotest bounds? Do you desire that the members of your own household, or your friends and neighbors, shall be brought to a knowledge of the truth? Do you desire to see the pathway to hell so completely overgrown that even the keen eye of an archangel could not discover a single footprint there; and the pathway to heaven thronged with happy pilgrims; then, that you may be fully qualified to discharge your duty, in bringing about those grand and glorious results, get the fulness of the Spirit, the heavenly dynamite, the power of the Holy Ghost.

"O that it now from heaven might fall,
And all our sins consume!
Come, Holy Ghost, for Thee we call,
Spirit of burning, come!"



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